

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: BRITISH EDITORIAL REACTION TO SOVIET TRIALS

1. BRITISH EDITORIAL COMMENTARY JULY 9TH AND 10TH
REGARDING THE GINZBURG AND SHCHARANSKY TRIALS
DESCRIBED THE DECISION TO HOLD THE TRIALS AT THIS TIME
AS A CALCULATED MOVE BY THE SOVIETS INTENDED TO
CHALLENGE PRESIDENT CARTER IN HIS HUMAN RIGHTS STAND.
IN ADDITION, COMMENTARY FOCUSED ON THE OVERALL EFFECTS
THAT THE TRIAL WOULD HAVE ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS
AND UNDERLINED THE INADEQUACIES OF THE SOVIET SYSTEM
WHILE ATTACHING A GOOD DEAL OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE
CARTER RESPONSE.

2. COMMENTARY ARGUED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE DELIBERATELY
FORCING A SHOWDOWN WITH THE US BY CHARGING SHCHARANSKY
WITH HIGH TREASON AFTER CARTER HAD PERSONALLY DENIED
THAT THE DISSIDENT HAD ANY CONNECTION WITH THE CIA.
THE COMMENTARY FURTHER ARGUED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE
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AIMING TO DEFLATE THE CARTER HUMAN RIGHTS STAND BY
SCHEDULING THE TRIALS 48 HOURS BEFORE VANCE AND
GROMYKO MEET IN GENEVA. THE BRITISH PRESS CONTENTED
THAT THE SOVIETS ARE CONFIDENT THAT CARTER WILL NOT
TAKE ANY DRASTIC MEASURES SUCH AS CANCELLING THE
NEGOTIATIONS. THIS, THE COMMENTARY ARGUED, WOULD MAKE
CARTER LOOK HELPLESS OR INSINCERE WHILE AT THE SAME

TIME SHOWING THE WORLD THAT THE SOVIETS INTEND TO CONTINUE THEIR INTERNAL POLICIES. ACCORDING TO THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH (7/9), "THE KREMLIN IS CALLING MR. CARTER A LIAR, AS WELL AS PRESUMING THAT HE IS A COWARD."

3. IN TERMS OF OVERALL EAST-WEST RELATIONS THE COMMENTARY SPECULATED THAT THE TRIALS WOULD INEVITABLY AFFECT THE CLIMATE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS, AND SPECIFICALLY, THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS AND THE PROSPECTS OF AN ARMS TREATY IN CONGRESS. SOME SPECULATED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PREPARED FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE SALT TALKS SINCE IT SEEMS MORE THAN LIKELY THAT CONGRESS WILL NOT RATIFY THE TREATY NOW BEING NEGOTIATED. IT WAS ALSO EXPRESSED THAT THESE TRIALS, TOGETHER WITH THE RECENT INCREASE IN TENSIONS WOULD DIMINISH THE AMERICAN CAPABILITY TO COORDINATE ITS CRISIS-MANAGEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

4. SOME OF THE COMMENTARY STRESSED THAT THE TRIALS UNDERLINE THE SOVIETS' DISREGARD FOR FOREIGN OPINION AND THEY INDICATED THE USSR INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS SUPPRESSIVE POLICIES. THE "GUARDIAN" SAID THE TRIALS ARE DAMAGING TO THE SOVIET UNION IN THAT THEY DEMONSTRATE "THE ARBITRARY NATURE OF ITS DECISION-MAKING" (7/10).

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5. THE "FINANCIAL TIMES" COMMENTED THAT THE SOVIETS CALLED THE TRIALS BECAUSE OF THE RECENT ESPIONAGE CHARGES FROM WASHINGTON, AND THE THREAT OF THE "CHINA CARD" AND THE "TIMES" ARGUED THAT THE USSR NEEDS AN EXCUSE TO BLAME ITS INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES ON FOREIGNERS.

6. THE OUTCOME OF THE TRIALS AND THE SUBSEQUENT US RESPONSE IS EXPECTED TO DETERMINE FUTURE EAST-WEST RELATIONS. PAPERS COMMENTED THAT THE INITIAL AMERICAN REACTION TO THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE TRIALS WAS ONE OF ANGER BUT STILL ALONG THE LINES OF "THE MODERATE VANCE VIEW" (SINCE THE GENEVA TALKS HAVE NOT BEEN CANCELLED), AND THAT THE BREZHEVSKI "LINKAGE" VIEW IS LOSING INFLUENCE. (DAILY TELEGRAPH, 7/10). EDITORIALS GENERALLY CONCLUDED THAT THE WEST WOULD BE FORCED TO RECONSIDER ITS POLICIES TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION IF SHCHARANSKY AND GINZBURG ARE CONVICTED. THE "GUARDIAN" ARGUED THAT CONVICTIONS WOULD PRESENT A MAJOR PROBLEM TO WESTERN GOVERNMENTS BECAUSE WESTERNERS WOULD BE FORCED TO RECONCILE THEIR ASPIRATIONS "TO LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE HUMAN RIGHTS ARE UNIVERSALLY RESPECTED," WITH THEIR DESIRES TO PREVENT THE SUPERPOWERS FROM

CONFRONTATION.

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